

NAME: Hirata, Masao DATE OF BIRTH: 5/31/1903 PLACE OF BIRTH: Kumamoto  
Age: 70 Sex: M Marital Status: M Education: Elementary & Boarding School

## PRE-WAR:

Date of arrival in U.S.: 8/13/20 Age: 18 M.S. Y.Y. Port of entry: San Fran.  
Occupation/s: 1. Farmer 2. \_\_\_\_\_ 3. \_\_\_\_\_  
Place of residence: 1. Fresno, California 2. Los Angeles, Ca. 3. \_\_\_\_\_  
Religious affiliation: Christian Church  
Community organizations/activities: President of an association and Vice-President

## EVACUATION:

of an Industrial Union (Heigen Industrial Association)

Name of assembly center: Internment Camp: 1. Pasadena (2/22/42-3/13/42) 2. Santa \*  
Name of relocation center: Poston, Arizona (In 1943) Had a  
Dispensation of property: \_\_\_\_\_ Names of bank/s bank account  
Jobs held in camp: 1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_  
Jobs held outside of camp: \_\_\_\_\_  
Left camp to go to: Denver, Colorado (In 1945)

POST-WAR: \* Fe <sup>New Mexico</sup> (3/13/42-6/12/42) 3. <sup>New Mexico</sup> Roseburg (6/42-6/43) (Justice Dept camps)  
Date returned to West Coast: Winter of 1946  
Address/es: 1. Denver, Colorado (1 yr) 2. 806 North Herbert Avenue, Los Angeles  
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Ca.

Religious affiliation: Christian Church

Activities: 1. President of Gardener's Union (1961) 2. President of Max Flight Golf  
If deceased, date, place and age at time of death: \_\_\_\_\_ Club - 3 yrs.

Name of interviewer: Heihachiro Takarabe Date: 2/10/74 Place: Los Angeles, Ca.

*Translator: Yaeiko Hernandez*



Name: Masao Hirata

Birth Date: 36th year pf Meiji

Birth Place: Kumamoto Ken

Came to the US: 9th year of Taisho : 1920

At what age did he come to the US: 18 years old

Major Occupation: Farming

Relocation Camp: Santa Fe, Rosenberg and Poston

Interviewer: Heihachiro Takarabe

Interview Date: Feb. 10, 1974

Interview Place: Los Angeles, California

Translator: Tayeko Hernandez

Typist: Lora Tanaka



MR. MASAO HIRATA

Q. Please tell me your name.

A. My name is Masao Hirata.

Q. Where are you from?

A. 3284 Toshine-Mura Iwano, Shimomashi-Gun in Kumamoto Prefecture. I was a commoner.

Q. When were you born?

A. I was born on the 31st of May in Meiji 36.

Q. Do you remember the big events which happened in Japan, such as the Sino-Japanese War and World War I?

A. I remember just World War I.

Q. What happened at that time?

A. Some songs were sung about the fall of the city of (Chintao) when (Kowshu) Bay was surrendered. We had the best time at that time.

Q. When was it?

A. It was about Taishow 7 or 8, I remember, for I came to America in Taishow 9.

Q. How old were you then? would be sixteen years old when I came here.

A. Two more months and I would be seventeen years old when I came here.

Q. Can you remember some happy memories in Japan?

A. I remember two plays that I played in in my elementary school days. One was ("Daiku Yoigeki"), which was played when I was in the third grade. The other was "Faithful Lieutenant Hirose", played when I was in the fourth grade. They were my happy memories. Then my mother died of an infectious disease. It happened when I was in the fourth grade, so I had a hard time graduating from elementary school, working as a baby-sitter and at various



tasks. That was the beginning of my hardships.

Q. What kind of hardships have you experienced?

A. My father was in America when I was born. Then my mother died when I was in the fourth grade, so I had to live with my grandparents. As soon as I graduated from elementary school, I was sent to a family as a live-in baby-sitter. After the child of the family died, I did farm work. I got paid only eight yen a year. At that time one big sack of millet cost two yen, and 18,000 cc (4.756 gallons) of rice cost four yen. I worked for a year and got two sacks of millet and 18,000 cc of rice.

Q. Were you the only child in the family?

A. Yes, I was. There was a girl living with us. She was a daughter of my uncle. Since my father was in America, my uncle and his daughter were living with us.

Q. What do you remember about your mother?

A. She used to go to her parent's house, since her husband was away in America. Well, one memory about her was on the wedding day of my aunt. I was in the second or third grade and very little. I fretted for my mother. Then my mother bound me to a big pillar with a thick cord, scolding.

Q. Do you remember anything about what your mother said to you?

A. I don't remember so well.

Q. What do you remember about your school days?

A. When I was in the third grade, the teacher, named Motomura, who was a woman, told us a story about iridescent insects during lunch time.

Q. What was the story of the insect?

A. I don't remember so well, but something like this: although the insect is pretty outside, it is not, actually.

Q. Was that something moral?



A. Yes, it was.

Q. Do you remember about the teachers you had?

A. Yes, I do. When I was in the first and second grade, Mr. Funabara, who was a Shinto priest, was my teacher. Then in the third grade, I had a woman teacher, Kimi Motomura, who told us a lot of stories. Mr. Yoshitake was my fourth grade teacher. In the fifth and sixth grades, Mr. Shohei Imazu, who was an assistant principal, was my teacher.

Q. Were they strict?

A. No, I didn't have many strict teachers. But they were stricter than the teachers now.

Q. What do you remember about your school life?

A. We had athletic meetings and literally (?) exercises. To me, the athletic meetings were the most pleasant and memorable.

Q. How about sad memories?

A. After my mother's death, I sometimes couldn't go to school, because I had to baby-sit. Sometimes I went to school with the baby on my back. But I had to go back home because it interrupted my study. It was sad for me to think that I couldn't study very much while everyone else in the class could.

Q. Was that when you were in the fourth grade?

A. Yes, it was in the fourth, fifth and sixth grades that I had to baby-sit. After my mother's death, my grandmother started to go to work, so I was the only person that was able to baby-sit.

Q. How long did you work at your uncle's home after your graduation?

A. I worked as a baby-sitter there for one year. When I was fifteen years old, I stayed home and helped with housework. Then I went to work when I was sixteen years old, and got paid 36 yen a year, which was 10 sen (1 yen equals 100 sen) a day. Then I returned home to help the family. And I found



myself to be already eighteen years old. I thought that spending my life in that way helping the family in that way was dull and meaningless and that I had to do something for it. My mother's brother was a deputy mayor of a town office, and he said to me one day, "Masao, you are now eighteen years old. Since your father is in America, why don't you ask him to send you to America? If it's impossible, how about going to Brazil, where my youngest brother is?" It happened to be the time when World War I was over and the people in America began to come back to Japan. There was a man among them that was with my father in America. He said to me, "Oh, yes. I know him and have his address. Write him a letter." And I did. I said to him in the letter, "I am now eighteen years old. Though I haven't met you yet, please read this letter if you think me your son. If you don't read this, I would not think you my father, and will go to Brazil or somewhere else." Then he sent me 200 dollars, which was worth 400 yen at that time. Fifty dollars from among the money was for showing the American Immigration Office, and it cost ninety-four yen to go to America by boat.

Q. Hadn't your father written any letters to Japan before that?

A. No, he hadn't. Since my mother died, I think he tried to get some money in a hurry. But he couldn't. Since he didn't write to me, I couldn't write, either, because of no mailing address. Since my father moved here and there to get work, he couldn't write.

Q. How long had he been in America by then?

A. He had been there for eighteen years. He came to America the year I was born.

Q. Did you think that your father was unreasonable?

A. Yes, I thought he was a cruel man. He didn't let his son go to school, and his son was alone without his mother. It was natural for me to think what a bad father he was.



Q. . Anyway, did you decide to come to America?

A. Yes, I did. My father took proceedings for my immigration. As a reasoning for my immigration, he wrote on a paper that he needed a worker for the vinyard which he owned with his friend Mr. Katsuich Kameyama. So I came here.

Q. When was it?

A. It was in 1920 that I came to America. I left Nagasaki on the 24th of July, 1920. The boat dropped in Kobe, Shimizu, and Yokohama. It left Yokohama on the 27th of July and arrived in San Francisco via Hawaii on the 13th of August. The name of the boat was Kurea-Maru of the Tohyon Steamship Company. There was my father to meet me. It was the first meeting between father and son.

Q. How was it?

A. Well, I was able to recognize him as my father, for I had seen his pictures. But I didn't feel a real emotion for him that he was my father. I rather had a dearer feeling for my uncle. Because I was already 18 years old and had been with him for all these years.

My father bought me a suit and a suit-case, and we stayed the night in San Francisco. We left San Francisco on the 14th of August and the next morning we got to (Del Ray) in Fresno. Surprisingly enough, it was so hot in Fresno, being over 105°, while it was cold in San Francisco even in August. I would never forget this experience. Then on the 20th of that month, I started to work, picking up grapes. Dozens of people came into a camp to pick up grapes, but there were no houses for us to live in. We had to make our bed by ourselves. We piled up the boxes for raisins two stories high under a peach tree, put some hay on the boxes, and covered it with a canvas. This was the bed for us. When we slept, we hung up a mosquito net, whose one side was hung from a branch of the peach tree and



the other side from a stick we drove into the ground. Picking grapes was my first job in America.

Q. Were you glad to come to America?

A. I worked very hard from early morning when it was still dark to late evening after dark, and got fifteen or sixteen dollars a day since times were the best in 1920. This amount of money was worth twice as much in Japan. Just imagine that I got paid thirty-six yen a year in Japan working hard. Of course they got paid one yen a day if they worked on road construction, thirty yen a month. So I worked very hard there with my father.

Q. How much did you get a day?

A. They paid us 3.9 to 4 cents per tray, so if we worked very hard, we got fifteen to sixteen dollars a day. That was the same amount of money as we worked for a month in Japan. The main purpose for us to come to America was to earn money, so we worked very hard. I injured my right knee and became unable to bend it, because I worked too hard. So I had to have another hard time to cure it, being punctured with a needle.

Q. Did anything sad or happy happen to you there?

A. Nothing happened. Just nothing except working like mad. I didn't know English or anything about America at all. Getting up early in the morning, I got lunch and a bagful of water. Then I went to a place where trucks were. Sometimes the people from the vinyard came to pick me up. And I worked and worked. That was everything. There was nothing else besides working. The work was really hard. After the period of picking grapes was over, I asked my father to let me go to school. I was going to study as a school boy. But it was very difficult to be a school boy because I was unable to understand any English at all. So I entered a boarding school



of the Buddhist Society in Fresno in October of that year and stayed there until June the next year. At that time it cost only 250 dollars a year for going to school. Since I was eager to go to school, I worked very hard during the summer vacation to save money for the school.

My father went for work to (Enkyo Valley) to pick cucumbers, but he didn't seem like coming back though the school was about to start. I didn't understand why, because he didn't write to me. He usually came back to Fresno by the end of August when the season of picking grapes started. But he didn't come back even when September came. I was worried. Then I received news that he was unable to come back because of illness and no money to come back. I was shocked. He was my only parent. How could I go to school, leaving my sick father alone? At once I sent the 250 dollar check, which was for my tuition, to my father in Arizone. He finally came back and thanked me with tears.

We thought that it was not good for us to remain unsettled picking grapes, so we started farming together. Then came the time of depression. The price of grapes dropped from fifteen cents to two cents per pound. In 1923, anti-Japanese laws such as banning the inheritance of land and the Japanese immigration were legislated. That was the same time that the big earthquake in Tokyo happened. So I decided not to do farming against the law and came here to Los Angeles in 1924. There was a pastor named Rev. Katsuhiro Iseri who was one of my father's friends. His younger brother graduated from Stanford University, couldn't find a job here and was going back to Japan. I was invited to the farewell party for him at this church. And this was the first time for me to come across the church, of which I became a member of later. I believe now that God led me here to become a Christian.



Q. What did you do in Los Angeles?

A. First, I worked on a strawberry farm of my friend's elder brother in Torrence, picking strawberries. Mr. Tohru Maeda was the name of the friend who used to live in the same town in Japan and came to America with me. Later, I grew strawberries. In 1929 I got married and had my first daughter in 1930.

In 1931, Dr. Tashiro asked me to reclaim the 40 acre land in Cotura Valley which he bought. I didn't want to go to Fresno where it was hot. But he insisted on my reclamation of the land. He said that he was going to grow grapefruits on 30 acres of the land and that I could use the rest of the 10 acres free for three years. I couldn't refuse him, because he asked me so earnestly, and I went there.

In 1939, the year the Olympics were held in Los Angeles, twin sons were born. I was working in Fresno taking care of my two year old daughter, while my wife was in Los Angeles. Then I received a call from Los Angeles that my wife had an operation in a hospital and twin sons were born. At once I had to return all the way to Los Angeles with my little daughter. Then the second daughter was born, next the third daughter, the third son, and the fourth son. were born. Unfortunately, we lost our fourth son. We had a hard time bringing up all the children. The next hardship waiting for us was the outbreak of World War II.

Q. Was your wife living in Los Angeles before the war broke out?

A. Yes. In Fresno we couldn't get good doctors, and Dr. Tashiro suggested that she stay in Los Angeles. So I left her in her parent's house.

Q. Were her parents living here?

A. Yes, they were. My father had already died in 1931, but he was glad to know of his first grandchild's birth before his death.



Q. Did you have a hard time in the depression period?

A. Yes, I did. When we got a lot of strawberries, the price was low, and

when we didn't produce so many, we could sell them at a high price.

Sometimes they got infested with vermin or rotted by rain. Farming was really hard work. We could have a good year, but the next two years might be bad. Especially the way the Japanese people worked was incredible.

Q. What time did you start working in the morning?

A. I never got up later than 5:30 in the morning. The Japanese way of farming was just incredible. We worked and worked and worked desperately. You can never imagine how hard we worked by seeing the people working on a farm today. I lived with my father and his friend, Mr. Kameyama, in a vineyard in Fresno. They gave us a house just like a chickenhouse, and the clay of the wall was falling off. We lived in such a house and worked.

Q. How did you meet your wife?

A. One of my father's friends asked him to let me take his daughter as a wife. She had just come to America from Hiroshima after graduating from a junior high school and was only 16 years old or so. It was my first marriage.

Q. How old were you then?

A. I was 26 or 27 years old and she was about 9 years younger than I.

Q. How did you feel when you heard the news that Pearl Harbor was attacked?

A. I was worried and wondered what was going on. Banks refused to let me withdraw the money I had saved. We had lived there for ten years and my six children had been able to go to any shop they wanted without money, for they could charge me later. But various rules were made after the outbreak of the war that prevented us from shopping. For example, we had to apologize before entering stores. A lot of news about the people arrested by the FBI



began to be reported in newspapers. I was afraid of getting arrested because I had a wife and six children, had already planted seedlings on 50 acres of land, and all the money was invested in the land. What could we do if I were arrested? So I started burying the things which might cause any trouble. Since I was doing Kendoh (Japanese fencing), I had a lot of materials on it. I put those things and some other things together, dug a hole, and buried them. Then my wife suggested that burying was not safe enough and that we should burn them. So we started burning the things. Books were especially difficult to burn, so we had to tear pages piece by piece. We burned a lot of books.

But on the 21st of February, when I came home from work, the FBI were waiting to arrest me. I will never forget the day.

Q. What year was it?

A. It was in 1942.

Q. How did you feel then?

A. There was nothing for me to do. Two men from the FBI were waiting for me at my house and told me that they were arresting me as a foreign resident in enemy country. They took me to jail in Indio, then that same night around 12 o'clock I was moved to a jail in Riverside. The next morning I was taken to the (C.C. Camp) in Pasadena and stayed there until the 13th of March. Then they took me to Santa Fe in New Mexico and gave us a hearing. After that they divided us into groups such as the group to release, to parole, and to intern. They put a number on my clothes and took my picture as an internee. A card was written that I would be treated just as an internee. After the hearing, I told the people in the same group that we would be treated as internees according to the card. But they said,



"No, how can we be internees since we are noncombatants". But my guess was right. On the 12th of June, Army officers came, put each of us internees in a bathroom, and checked our bodies and our possessions. They put us on a train without telling us where we were being taken. Everyone on the train and those left in the camp cried, because we didn't know where they would take us. The army put a camp in the middle of the desert in Roseburg. There was a high watchtower and machine guns were set. They took away all of our possessions including money and locked us in a room. They told us that they would shoot us if we got closer than three feet. I stayed in that camp for one year until 1943.

Q. Were you able to contact your wife at all?

A. She sent two postcards to me. If they were written in Japanese it took one month to reach me because they were sent to New York to check the contents of the letters. Written in English, it took less time for them to be delivered because the army checked them. At that time my eldest daughter was 11 or 12 years old and she translated my letters in English for my wife and wrote letters in English of what my wife told her in Japanese.

Q. How was she supporting your children and herself while you were gone?

A. In April just after I was arrested, all the Japanese people in (Kashiom) were taken to a relocation camp in Postan.

Q. Didn't they stay in Santa Anita first?

A. No, they didn't because Postan is closer than Santa Anita from where we were living. It was just across Colorado. I can't describe how we felt on the train when we were taken to Santa Fe.

Q. Did you think you were going to be killed?

A. No, I didn't, but I worried about my wife and my six little children left



behind. I also worried about the land already planted with seedlings.

You can't imagine how I felt at that time. I would have been happier if they had put my family together in a camp. Being separated from them made it unbearable. The eldest son is now 42 years old. Time has passed quickly.

Q. How long were you kept in Santa Fe?

A. I was kept there until June, then sent to Roseburg.

Q. How was the camp life in Roseburg?

A. They divided us into groups of 30 people and put each group in a shack. Beds were set up for us in it. They made us work a little bit. Every month we were given a three dollar coupon. We spent 10 cents each day, getting either a box of cigarettes or a beer. We stayed in Roseburg for one year.

Q. What kind of topics did you talk about with your friends there?

A. We talked about everything freely. We also listened to the radio news from Japan.

Q. Were you allowed to bring a radio in the camp?

A. No, we were not. But someone caught the broadcast by some means. I don't know how. Mr. Masao Yoshiomi was the broadcasting director. Life in camp was not so strict. The only thing we had to do was to obey the rules.

Q. Did anything happen in the camp resisting the army?

A. Yes. We went on strike against their making us work. Then they ordered us not to go out of the shack except to go to the bathroom. Even when we went to the bathroom a watch followed us. We younger people in our 40's or 50's could stand it, but for the older people it was torture to be kept in an awfully hot room without a fan. So we gave up the strike. We thought it was in vain to go on strike captured in a camp by the army. Some of them



continued resisting and were put in a separate room from us. Mr. Sugimatsu was one of them.

Q. Did you yourself get angry at the situation they made?

A. I was angry at the way they treated families, separating us from our wife and children. Everybody else was mad, too. Then the family reunion became possible in a camp at Crystal City, Texas, by the negotiation of a Spanish ambassador with the army. We submitted a petition for the family reunion to the army. Since I had seven family members, they sent me to the camp in Poston instead of sending my family to my place.

Q. Did you get out of the camp earlier than any other people there?

A. After one complete year I was sent to my family. The rest of the people in where they were Roseburg, guarded by the army, were sent back to the camp in Santa Fe where civilian people watched them. They said it was not necessary for the army to protect us since they needed more soldiers to fight in the war.

Q. When you were going to leave the camp, were the rest of the people leaving, too?

A. No, they weren't.

Q. Then were you the only person that could leave the camp earlier?

A. No, I was not the only one. There were some other people leaving for the same reason as I had. But the rest of the people were sent to Santa Fe and a lot of them remained in Santa Fe until the end of the war.

Q. Who were the people kept in Santa Fe until the end of the war?

A. They were mainly the leaders of the Japanese people in America, such as investors in real estate, president of the Central Japanese Association, and other leaders. I had been in the country so even though I had done Kendoh and also worked as a president of an association and as a vice-president of an industrial union, I was not an important person for the army.



Q. Were you glad to be sent to Poston?

A. I was so happy to see my family again. Also, the standard of living was much higher than in Roseburg. A lot of things were furnished, even a golf field. We could even go fishing.

The only thing that depressed me was that I was betrayed in my trust in my wife during my absence. My happy feeling turned into a sad one as soon as I knew the fact. I suffered very much in the camp. However, I took my wife and children to Denver when we were freed and stayed there for one year or so. In 1946 everyone was allowed to return to California, so we moved back here. When we got out of the camp, they gave each of us only 25 dollars. I experienced unspeakable hardships to support all my family. I will never forget it. When we returned to California we didn't have a house to live in. One of my friends leased me this small house. The next problem was that I couldn't start my work. I didn't have a car or anything. My farm had not been touched for five years. I didn't have any new tools to cut down the grasses of the waste land. But I had to work to support my family so I borrowed old tools and worked on my farm. Every Japanese person had to start again from the beginning. Because we were all <sup>not</sup> living in our old homes, we couldn't ask for help from anybody.

Q. Was that the year of 1946?

A. Yes, we came back here in the winter of 1946 and began our living from 1947.

Q. Did you bring all your family back here?

A. Yes, I did from Denver.

Q. Where was the first place you lived upon returning to California?

A. It is the same place we are living now. We didn't move at all. We just bought the house instead of renting.



Q. Was somebody living in the house during your absence?

A. No. We bought the house after we came back from the camp. We had already sold the house we used to live in before going to the camp. The present house is 806 North Herbert Avenue. When I was looking for a house for my family, one of my friends offered a house to rent. The rent was 75 dollars a month and I had to pay 3 months rent in advance. Then I went back to Denver to bring my family here. Unfortunately the baggages we had sent from Denver didn't arrive here for over a month. We got in trouble without beds, cooking tools and so on. We suffered a lot for that month although I bought some necessary things little by little. How can I describe the hardships we experienced to begin living again after the war. I had to use an old truck which I had to push from behind to start the engine. I had to finance my six children through school. I think what made me overcome all these hardships were my youth and strong will.

Eventually, in 1953 I was divorced after efforts to get along well with my wife. I didn't mind experiencing physical hardships, but the mental hardships we had to face made me suffer more. It is a most unhappy thing for human beings that a man and wife can't get along well. At that time my eldest daughter was already married and my eldest and second sons were in France after volunteering for the Air Force. The rest of my three children were brought up by me.

Time passed and my third son finished his schooling and grew up. I had been single for a long time after my divorce. One day one of my friends named Mr. Goroh Inoue, who is now living in Pasadena, said to me, "Mr. Hirata, I have good news for you." "What is that, Inoue?" I asked him. Then he said



"A teacher of my wife's named Shizuko Ohta, who is in Okayama, Japan, and a wife of a pastor, asked us to introduce somebody nice in America to a lady who is working at a Sunday School at her husband's church." I told him that I didn't want a wife since I already had six children and asked him how old she was. Mr. Inoue replied that she was 33 years old. "Oh, that's too young for me. My daughter is almost the same age! I'm sorry but I don't want a wife," was my answer. But he and his wife visited me frequently to try and persuade me. They said, "The pastor's wife says that she guarantees that the lady is a good person. Please write a letter to her even as a sense of duty. I beg you to save our honor to the pastor and his wife. Please write her just once." I said, "I don't want such a young woman since I have six children already. Even if I want a wife, she should be a mere woman who just cooks and washes." Anyway, we began to correspond with each other. Then a club I belonged to which recited Chinese poems was planning to go to Japan for sightseeing in 1960. I thought I would decide whether or not to marry her after I met her in Japan while on the tour. Again, Mr. Inoue came to me to ask if I had a picture of myself. I said to him, "Mr. Inoue, I haven't taken pictures of myself these days since I am busy playing and going to bars to drink, enjoying my being single. But he insisted on getting one. Since I had one taken when I was only 50 years old or so, I gave it to him. It was taken when I won the championship in a golf tournament and got a trophy. At that time, I loved playing golf, and used to play a lot. Anyway, the father of my golf friend, who was only one year older than I, told me that he would take my picture with the trophy. Since I didn't wear suits nor a tie, he made me wear his suit and tie and took my picture. I was just 50 years old or less, not so bald, with glasses, and



didn't look bad. Anyway, Mr. Inoue got it and sent it to Japan. One day Mr. Inoue brought me a letter from Mrs. Ohta that was exactly the same, even the words were the same, as a letter from the woman I was corresponding with. (By the way, her name was Yoshiko Kunitake.) So I found out that they had been checking her letters before she sent it to me.

I didn't understand why they did that. So I wrote to her, "I received the exact same letter as yours from Mrs. Ohta. If she is checking your letters, I don't think you can write what you want. I don't know if my letters are also being checked, but I am going to get some envelopes, write my address on them, and send them to you so that you can write whatever you would like to write to me." And she did. I preferred to marry a woman from Kagoshima, but this lady was in Okayama. I wrote to her that I had six children and that I didn't have any intention to have more nor to marry. But she got a lot of information about me from Mr. Inoue and expressed in her letter that she'd like to marry me. It cost a lot of money to go to Japan, more than a thousand dollars for a round trip. I had to carry at least a thousand and five hundred dollars for the expenses in Japan, too. So I needed at least three thousand and five hundred dollars.

I was going to go to Japan around 1960, but Mr. Inoue told me that it was cruel of me to keep her waiting for such a long time. So I went to a bank to borrow some money because I didn't have enough money to go to Japan. They asked me the reason for my need and I told them I was going to Japan to bring my wife to America. They lent me a thousand dollars at once. I left here on August 31 and arrived in Japan on September 1. She met me at the Haneda Airport with the wife of the minister. We stayed at the First Tokyo Hotel and did some sightseeing the next day. Then we three went to Okayama.



There Reverend Takujiroh Ohta married us. Then we went to the American Consulate in Fukuoka to report our marriage officially. Then we went to Kagoshima where her parents were. At that time I didn't know she was from Kagoshima. We visited her parent's house at Ibuzuki. I was afraid I would go broke if we stayed at a hotel there since it was a famous tourist resort. Fortunately, her mother offered a room at her house. While I was there I was anxious to go to Kumamoto, my home town. But she was weak and got sick, so I had to wait till she got well. During that time I applied for a passport for her to come to America. Finally, she got well, and we went to Kumamoto.

In my hometown, the relatives were worried a lot about me because more than a month had passed since I had come to Japan and I had not visited them yet. They were afraid I might leave Japan again without visiting them. So one of my cousins wrote to me to ask when I was coming over. It was already the beginning of October that the two of us visited Kumamoto. The house where I was born and bred remained almost unchanged in 40 years. The next day we visited my parent's graves. My mother died from an infectious disease and was buried in a small urn next to my father's. Since my grandmother, my father's mother, was still alive when he died, I sent her his ashes to bury next to my mother's. The next day we visited the graves of my mother's ancestors, my aunt who loved me, and my grandfather who loved me more than anyone else. My mother had five brothers and four sisters and she got married the earliest so I was the first grandchild and my grandfather loved me very much. He died when he was 89 years old and I was 7 years old. The day we visited his grave was the day of the fiftieth anniversary of his death and they were holding a mass for him. My mother's sister and brother from



the neighboring village said to me, "Masao, what a coincidence that you came here on the fiftieth anniversary of your grandfather's death who loved you so!" My wife was very surprised at this coincidence, too. They told me to take the seat of honor. They welcomed us a lot and we stayed the night there. The next day we visited my aunt's house in the neighboring village and stayed the night. Everyone was glad about our visit and welcomed us. My wife was very impressed by their welcome and said, "I didn't expect to be served rice. We even had slices of raw fish. In such a deep country!" Indeed it was a very small village in the country. About 20 to 30 families were living there.

Two months had already passed when they began to worry if it was time for us to go back to America. I answered them that I still had enough time to spare. We went to Fukuoka and some other places, and it was already around the 10th of November that we got everything ready for leaving for America. She got a passport and also a visa from the Consul of the U.S.A. in Fukuoka. On the way back to Tokyo, we stopped in Okayama to see her friends in Himeji, and Osaka where my aunt's son was living, working for the Meiji Pharmaceutical Company. My aunt had told me to visit him in Osaka and had written her son a letter. When we got off the train in Osaka, we saw a big flag saying, "Welcome, Mr. Masao Hirata" put up by about 10 people who met us at the train station. That surprised us a lot. We stayed at his house that night, did some sightseeing in Osaka and left for Tokyo on that night by a night train.

When I got on the train, I was surprised how clever the Japanese people were. As soon as the train stopped, the first thing they did was not get on it but open a window from outside to put their baggages on the empty seat to



secure their seat, and slowly they got on the train. Arriving in Tokyo, we couldn't find a hotel to stay in because all of them were full. I asked the clerk how long we had to wait to get a room. He told us we had to wait at least a week. We were lost without a hotel in which to stay. Luckily, my mother's brother's second daughter, Yoshiko, got married and was living in Tokyo. So we went to her house by taxi. She said to me, "Don't worry. You are not a stranger to me. You can stay here until you leave for America." I had promised to marry her before I went to America 40 years ago, but we didn't because of the new immigrant law against the Japanese people. She wanted to come to America, but the law prohibited my bringing her here as my bride. So I wrote her, "I will not marry you because I cannot bring you here to America even if we were married. I don't want you to repeat my mother's failure again. I wish you would get your husband in Japan. I will get married here in America."

She was delighted to see me again and offered us a room to stay until we left. She had two sons and a daughter. One of them named Kenichiroh was going to Keio University. We left Kagoshima on the 15th, got to Tokyo on the 18th or 19th of November. Then we stayed there until the 24th of the month. She asked us to get up after her children and husband left for school and the company because she was busy taking care of them getting ready. We did as she asked since we were her guests. However, we didn't have a chance to meet her husband for a long time because he always came home late at night. I asked her when we could meet him. She said he would stay home on Sunday. I invited the family to a dinner of Chinese food the next Sunday and asked her to take us to a Chinese restaurant. After watching the last day public performance of Sumoh wrestling on TV, we went to Yokohama for a



Chinese dinner with the family. It was expensive, and the same price as in America. It cost almost \$3.50 to \$4.00 per person. I was a little bit surprised at this, thinking that it might be hard to make a living in Japan with a low salary.

On the day we were leaving, the baggage from Kagoshima had not arrived at Tokyo yet. But my cousin's husband was kind enough to say that he would send them to America for us. They hired a taxi for us to go to the airport, and we didn't have to pay for it. They had already paid beforehand. So we gave the driver a tip and left Japan at night on the 24th of November. We got to America the day before Thanksgiving Day. On Thanksgiving Day we visited my eldest daughter's house and my former wife happened to be there, too. She didn't want to be seen by me and was hiding in the kitchen. My new wife noticed her and asked me who she was. I told her that she was my former wife. She was surprised to learn that my former wife was still alive. She accused me of bad behavior toward my former wife and said, "I think you should forgive her and talk to her." I, myself, didn't even talk to her because she betrayed my trust. But my wife earnestly told me to forgive her for the sake of my children and also of the Hiratas. I was not willing to forgive her, but since she insisted on it, I sometimes invite her to our house with her eldest daughter and talk to her. She is now in her eldest daughter's house.

My present wife and I were not going to have children. But as time passed, she wanted our own children. She felt lonely in America because she didn't understand English nor have a friend here. I was perplexed at the unexpected request from her. I already had six children and was 56 years old when I married her. But I understood her and decided to have our child. First, we had decided to have only one child, but two years later, we had another



daughter. Then a boy was born. In my opinion, only those who really believe in God can know on looking back the things He has done for us. My former wife and I had three sons. Then my second wife and I had two daughters, so I wondered how it would be if we had a boy the next time and God gave us a boy. To think of it, I was amazed. But once I started believing in God, everything strange that happened to me became reasonable and clear.

As I mentioned before, it was August 20, 1924, that I started picking grapes for the first time. Then later in 1972 in Los Angeles we received 17 followers of Christ from Japan to celebrate the 95th anniversary of the Japanese Christians. It was in August. I had been working very hard at that time in order to take a vacation and take my children to some beach. One day there was a golf tournament in the Wendy Club, and I was going to attend. But the day before it started, I felt a pain at my waist. I was wondering if I had worked too hard and told one of my friends that I might not be able to go the next day because of my waist. Mr. Tanaka was sorry for me. I said, "I am sorry, too. But my health is the first thing I care about." I didn't go to the tournament the next day. But the strange thing was that the pain did not go away soon. Since I like reading books very much even though I didn't have much schooling, I began to read the book "The Gospel and Kon" by Ishikawa. In the beginning it was too hard for me to read. So I started reading backward from the end of the book. There was a paragraph by Ishikawa saying, "Maria and Marta believe in Lord Jesus. I believe in Him, too." Reading this, I was able to say, "I believe in God," for the first time in my life. Before that, I couldn't say that. I realized God.

I attended a morning prayer meeting for the first time in my life. It was on the 20th of August, the same date that I started picking grapes in



America. Before that, I had never attended the meeting even when I took my wife to the meeting. She went to a room for confessions while I waited for her in another room talking with my friends. She was so surprised that I attended the meeting that morning. I felt my whole body hot with burning passion while I was in confession. I realized how meaningless life would be if we didn't believe in God. Then I attended a training school for young Christians for three days. I have heard quite a few confessions by the followers from Japan. They split into some groups to visit San Francisco, Los Angeles, Chicago, and some other places. Finally, they had a general meeting at the Convention Center, and Igarashi and a nisei made speeches. They presented a gift from Japan, but they didn't open it at that place. The next day, on Monday, a farewell party was held for them at a Methodist church in Centinerary (?). I didn't go to work in order to attend the party. They showed us the gift, and it was a picture of grapes. The first work in America was picking grapes. It was August 20 that I was able to pray to God, the same date that I began to work picking grapes. And the picture Rev. Hommi, the President of the Japanese Christians Union, showed us was the picture of grapes. I was very moved by the will of God. In Chapter 15 of the Gospel according to John, He talks about the vine, saying, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.... If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." For myself, I picked grapes, cleaned the branches, burned those which could not bear fruit, and I know the branches which bear much fruit well. God told me that I would not have realized His will if He hadn't shown me the picture of grapes.



I felt that the 95th anniversary meeting was just for me, and was encouraged. After that I began to devote myself to the church more than anyone else. I had belonged to a lot of golf clubs, such as the Jet Flight Club; but I quit all of them. I also loved horseracing, but I quit it, too. Of course, I play golf with my friends just for fun and exercise.

Last year, on the 20th of May, which was the birthday of my eldest and second sons, I visited the hospital where my eldest and second sons were born to take pictures. Then I went to the place where I was working on a strawberry farm when my eldest daughter was born. My father died after she was born. When he was dying, he said to me, "I really regret that I was not able to let you go to school further than junior high school." Now an elementary school was built at the very place he died. And someone planted a pine tree there. I brought the tree back here. Then I asked Rev. Tsuchiya to be a witness, and took pictures of my whole family in front of the church. All my children and grandchildren got together. We had dinner together and had a celebration party at my third daughter's house.

Saved by God, everything strange that happened to me came to have meaning. And the kind of books I read have completely changed. I began to read the Bible, "On the Letter of Paul to Philemon" by Iwajiroh Yamamoto, the books by Ayako Miura, "Megumi no Ame (Rain of Blessing)", and the monthly magazines from the church in Okayama my wife had belonged to. I also began to read "Apollon" every morning. I am eager to read books. I also read "Hyakumannin no Fukoh (Tragedy of a Million People)", and "Shinto no Tomo (The Followers' Mate)". I am doing my best as a selected Christian. I attended a meeting as a Christian yesterday, gave my book to Rev. Morizawa since he wanted to read it, and so on. In my opinion, we should act as we have to as a Christian.



Believing in God only is not enough, I think. I was asked to be a representative of the Union, and do some other work, and these keep me busy. But these work are for God, and we have to help Him since we were saved by Him. At the meeting yesterday, I met a person from San Francisco with Rev. Morizawa, and found out that he comes from the neighboring village of my home town. His name is Mr. Matsuoka, and his daughter lives in a town I used to visit every year to collect contributions. And you come from Kagoshima. To think of all these things. I realize how deep God's will is. Yesterday Rev. Torie introduced you to me and it was the first time that I knew you were from Kagoshima and a pastor of nisei. So I accepted your interview with pleasure. Today, I was going to treat you, then some issei told me that Rev. Torie was going to do so. I thought we isseis should have done that. We have nine isseis in our church. I handed Rev. Morizawa some interesting books about the history of the Japanese in America. If you are interested in them, you can ask him for the books. I am sure they are very useful for you.

Q. Where did you receive your baptism?

A. It was in a Presbyterian Church in Pasadena.

Q. When was it?

A. It was on Christmas in 1961. My daughter was going to be baptized, and my wife suggested my being baptized together with the baby.

Q. Were you living in Pasadena at that time?

A. No. We were living here. Since Mr. Inoue, our go-between, was in Pasadena, and my wife wanted to go to a church there, I took them there. While they were in the church, it seemed unnatural for me to stay outside waiting, so I entered the church and was baptized. Just like a vine, I was saved by abiding in it.



- Q. You were living in Kenshington at that time, weren't you?
- A. Yes, we were.
- Q. Did you attend the service at the church every week?
- A. No, not every week. When Nancy, our eldest daughter, began to go to a Sunday School, we moved to the church there.
- Q. How old was your youngest child when you went to Japan to get married?
- A. He was already 21 years old.
- Q. Were all the children living with you? How old was the youngest child when you got divorced?
- Q. He was 12 years old or so. I sent the rest of my three children to school, and when my youngest boy was 21, I got married. I left my house for my children and lived in an apartment with my wife. Then my eldest son told me that it was not fair for them to let us live in an apartment while they were living in their parent's house. I explained to him that it would be worse if my children and my new wife couldn't get along well. They said they were going to move into their eldest sister's house where their mother was living, too, and told us to move back to my house. I said, "all right," since I liked my house better than an apartment. They are all happy there. Sometimes my eldest son invites me to go out golfing and we play together. Since I was not rich, bringing up six children, they helped me a lot. One day they asked me to get a car for them. But it was not easy for me to buy it. So I got the car for them on condition that they help me work after school so that I could work as much as I had to pay for it. As soon as they came back from school, they changed their clothes and came to me by the car I had bought. We ate some cake or fruit before we began to work, and they used to work a few hours every day after school.



We have been helping one another in my family; therefore, our relationship is so close that people are surprised. Even my wife is surprised, too. As soon as something goes wrong with my health, two sons come over to visit me, saying, "How do you feel, papa? Are you all right?" So I feel strong. Although we don't live together, our hearts are always one. They both live in Montebello and work in the same area. My eldest daughter is now in Westminster. She brought her daughter here yesterday. "Hi, Grandpa!" she said. I said, "Oh, Cathy, welcome here!" I am happy with these grandchildren. I have ten of them. My second son's son is now going to college. He is receiving a scholarship from the State of \$2,200 a year. So he is going to get almost \$9,000 for four years from the State. He told me that all he had to pay was for the books he needed. That's a good thing, so I told my children to get scholarships. Then one said, "Daddy, I got 5 As and only 1 B." "Oh, you had better get all A.", I said. "Oh, that's too hard!" This is a happy conversation with my children.

I began to receive my pension since I have become 65 years old. So I only work three days a week. On Monday, I spend half a day with the pastor, and on Wednesday I attend the prayer meeting. Also on Monday afternoon I have to take my second daughter to piano lessons. Like this, I have a lot of work to do. Various church meetings are held at least once every week. This evening here at this church I am going to make a speech of my proof as a Christian, about how I traced my life, how I came across God, and how I feel now. I would like all my friends to listen to my speech tonight.

Especially I want the people who are not Christians to come here tonight. There are a lot of people who know me, such as the people of the Wendy Golf Club, Senior Golf Club, the association of people from Kumamoto Prefecture, Gardeners' Guild, Gadena Club, and so on. I really want them to listen to my story. Please pray for me.



- Q. Who else came to America from Japan on the same boat as yours?
- A. On that boat, the Prince of Rumania was with us. So it was quite a merry departure from the port of Yokohama. Mr. Tohru Maeda who was in the same village as mine came to America by the same boat. He was two years my senior at school. Tsuyo Kobayashi was also on board and is still alive.
- Q. Were a lot of brides on board?
- A. Yes. Tsuyo Kobayashi was also a bride. At that time they were able to take their bride to America after getting married in Japan. I don't know if the marriage through exchanging pictures of a bride and a bridegroom was still popular or not.
- Q. Do you know any stories about this picture-marriage?
- A. Yes, I heard a lot of awful stories. Some sent his picture taken ten years ago, or sent another person's picture. So I heard a lot of sad things happened. There was a man named Honda who went to America from my village, and he got married with Tsuyo Yamamoto who was in the next village by exchanging pictures. She went to America, met him, then came back to Japan again because she found out that her husband was bald since he had sent her a picture taken 15 years ago. This story had happened when I was still in Japan.
- Q. What else did you hear about this marriage?
- A. Since the number of women was much less than that of men, a group of men often raped a wife of someone. I heard that this used to happen a lot, but these problems decreased at the time we came here. Before that, the number of men who came to America at the age of 15 to 20 was much more than the women from Japan. If they didn't have much money, they couldn't afford to send for their wives. It cost quite a lot to go to Japan to take her as a bride. I am sure it was a miserable situation.



About the marriage through pictures, I didn't pay much attention. I just heard gossip that someone's husband was 18 years older and others 15 years. For myself, I had a bitter experience of being betrayed by my wife while we had six children. We were almost having a silver anniversary. I am sure that a lot of other issei have also experienced this. Someone even committed suicide, I hear. You can see a lot of people with this kind of experience in Evergreen. This man in Evergreen had to kill himself, betrayed by his wife, left a lot of children. I can understand how he felt.

The farming situation was really bad. In Los Angeles we grew carrots. It cost 10 cents to take a big box of carrots to a market. There we sometimes had to sell them for less than 15 cents a box when we produced well. For us, there seemed to be no way except to give them away to horses. The man who carried the carrots to the market used to give us 10 cents, saying that the box was sold for 10 cents. He couldn't tell us that he threw the carrots away. We began to work from early in the morning. In the evening we picked the carrots and washed them to take to the market. We were miserable. Most of them had a lot of children. At that time there was no gas stove. We cooked by burning wood. My former wife's sister had a sad experience. She was going to use a wood stove. Then she went to the bathroom leaving her 7 year old daughter. While the mother was away, she tried to start the fire, and her dress caught on fire. When her mother came back from the bathroom, two-thirds of her daughter's body had been burnt. They took her to a hospital, but she died.

Q. Please tell me some other stories like this.

A. When I was in (Rezond), I heard this story. At that time the number of nisei women was very little. One day a go-between bribed this nisei woman, for whom



he himself arranged the marriage, into sexual activities in return for favors to her family. Since her husband used to go out fishing often, leaving her at home, she was feeling lonesome. The man told her that he would treat her family better if she obeyed him, and she did. But the man didn't like to keep the promise he made so she finally told everything to her husband. He got very mad at the man. At that time the law prohibited us to have our own land, so we got the land under the name of someone who was born in Hawaii and was over 20 years old. By borrowing and using the name of this woman's husband, we had the land to work. So we were afraid that we all might lose the land because the man who bribed the wife was a member of our group.

We made a lot of effort to settle this trouble. We the young were around the age of 28 or so, but the issei were about 50 years old. We frequently visited Mr. Nishimoto, whose name we borrowed, to calm his anger. Finally we succeeded in settling this problem. We asked Mr. Nishimoto to live somewhere else, and we decided not to give the land to Mr. Okano, the man who was to be accused. Instead, we gave the right to work on the land to his son.

Another story was about the people from Kumamoto and was what I heard about. Mr. Nishimoto, who was older than I, had two daughters. The elder sister married Mr. Tsuge, and the younger one Mr. Hirano. First this younger sister used to visit Mr. Hirano's house to learn English, and they got married. Later, Mr. Hirano had consumption, so she worked hard to support her family. She had two or three children. One day a visitor handed her ten dollars or so as a present to him. She showed it to her husband, but he didn't believe it. He was suspicious that she must have done something to get the money. She got very angry because she did her best, working hard and



taking care of him and the children. Mr. Nishimoto had the first grade in Kendoh, but she got so mad at him that she killed him and one of her children. Then she ran away from the house but was finally arrested. She was put in a mental hospital.

Q. When did it happen?

A. I think it was around 1922 or 23.

On the other hand, Mr. Tsuge, whom her elder sister married, had Hansen's disease and killed himself by shooting his head. This tragedy happened after I came to America. Besides these, there are too many tragedies to count. The problems between the men and women happened all over. A man raped a woman of the same village by threatening with a gun.

The saddest story I ever heard is like this. The son of a man who owned an open-air grocery shop asked his father to get him a car. He was the only son of his family. But his father told him that he couldn't afford it. Hearing what his father said, he tumbled down and died. The father's grief over the death of his only son was so great that I couldn't stand seeing him. Later, on his way back home from (Kezuma) where he went to see peas for his shop, he was in a car accident and he died. We can't tell the destiny of human beings.

In Pasadena a similar thing happened. One day a father went to the sea and died. Then his third son went swimming and died. Therefore, I think how important it is to give children what they want inspite of being poor. I bought two cars for my children even though it was hard for me. I said to them, "I have six children to support so I cannot save money. If you don't help me work, I cannot afford a car." Then they said, "Daddy, we will help you." So I bought cars for them. I also told them that I would give the money they earned.



After they returned from military service, I told them to stay in my house to save money before getting married, because I wasn't able to save money to give them having six children. I also told them to become independent after saving enough money and getting married, because a wife is an unrelated person. "Do anything for yourself. If the present job doesn't provide enough money to make a living, change the work." If someone in my family needs help, we have to help him. Otherwise, be independent. Papa can work as long as I am healthy." These are what I used to tell my children. "Papa, you're right," they said.

When they were leaving for Europe as soldiers, I said to them, "Listen carefully. At the present time, the United States of America is the number one country in the world. You are the soldiers of the country. I have been in this country for fifty years, and I am not afraid of the white people. You don't have to cringe to anyone. But you must never treat your men bad. Take good care of them." They came back from Europe to Texas Air Force Base, and called me at night from there. He said to me, "One of my men told me he would meet me at the airport when I come over to that place, since I took good care of him." I was so glad to know that he had done what I told him. Also I said to my sons, "When you are in Europe, please send your younger brother a birthday present. I'm sure he would be happy for it and remember it. You don't have to send me anything." My third son's birthday is on March 17, St. Patrick's Day, and he received a birthday present from his brothers on that day from Europe. In this way, my family's heart is always in one. I think that money should be for bringing up and educating children. There would be no value in money saved that hadn't been used for children's education. In my opinion, it is our responsibility to bring up and educate our children so that they may become independent from other people. When my son's friend



visited my house, he said to my eldest son Takeo, "Hey, Tak, your papa isn't papa-like. He looks like your brother, doesn't he." When I talk with people, I consider myself to be the same age as they are. I never talk as a senior to them. How could we communicate with each other without being together in our heart? The three children I have now also think of me as their friend and say, "Daddy, let's go some place. Give me a ride." And we go golfing together. I got golf clubs for all three children, share the balls in a bucket, and enjoy shooting. Parents and children should play or do something together. This way we can understand one another well. Usually parents don't want to be bothered by their children, but that is not right. Children are happy to do something with their parents together. My wife also seems this way, avoiding playing with them. So I always say to her that it is not good. I said to her, "They cannot wash dishes as well as you since they are young, but do it together." It is natural that children can't accomplish things as well as we adults. When we worked together on a farm, I gave them a small part of it to take care of themselves, showed them how to seed watermelons, and let them do it themselves. How happy and excited they were to find the sprouts from the place they seeded. For them it was a great discovery. "Papa! Flowers came out! We got water-melons!" they reported excitedly.

We can't educate children by just telling them; we have to show them through actions and doing things together with them. The other day when we were going to see a movie, my wife told me to leave the children since they didn't want to go. I said to her, "No, that's not right. Even if they don't want to see the movies we should take them with us since we seldom see Japanese ones." And I took them all to the theater. Since they are children they can't tell if the movie is good or not. I hear about the fathers in Japan



that inspite of their being in a high position at his company, earning a lot of money and financing their children through schools, they come home late at night when the children are asleep, go to work after the children have already left for school, and don't have any chance to see the children or talk to them. They have no communication nor contact with one another. The only relationship they have is that they are of the same blood. This is very saddening. Parents should educate their children so that they can tell anything to their parents without hesitation. It's a good thing my children used to bring their girlfriends to my house to introduce them to me. I used to tell them that everyone hid her bad points and only showed her good points and that the only way to judge the girlfriend was to see her mother. She will become like her mother when she gets old. I said to them, "You had better take responsibility yourself if you love her. No one can tell what she would be ten years later, twenty years later, or even fifty years later."

My second son married a Chinese. She was the only daughter and her mother didn't want her to marry a Japanese man. Anyway, I always say to my wife, "Be a mother whom your children can always come to consult about matters they need to without hesitation." When I talk with my children, I use English. My wife doesn't know English nor wants to learn it. So she doesn't understand what we are talking about. She sometimes asks us what we are talking about. When they were in the military in Europe, I wrote them long letters every week about the events of golf here and some other topics. I kept all the letters from them, and when they returned home they asked me what I was going to do with those tremendous amount of letters. I told them I was going to keep them as a memory. And they laughed. We are always together at heart even if we live far apart.



The issei people worked very very hard to support their family and to send their children to school. Since they didn't know English, they worked on farms and brought up many children. But the children have become Americans not knowing Japanese. In Japan there is a saying, "To be dutiful to your parents, to be faithful to your country," but in America, the situation is the opposite. Parents have responsibility for their children's education. The nisei people are getting old enough to realize their parents' hardships in bringing them up. In America they don't teach filial piety. The issei people didn't like the attitude of their children, saying that they didn't feel grateful for us. In my opinion, this is not true. The nisei people know it, but because of the language problems they cannot communicate their feelings to their parents and the other issei people. I said to the issei people, "I think that we issei are responsible for this fact because the nisei people didn't come from the sky, but were brought up and educated by the issei people. If my children are bad, I am the one that is responsible for it."

There are a lot of so called war-brides who came to America from Japan. And a lot of comments have been made about them, but the Japanese men are to blame for the war-brides. If Japan had not lost the war, they would not have married American soldiers. Because of the defeat, they had to suffer from poverty, shortage of food, and other hardships. Some of them were obliged to marry Americans in order to survive. I feel sorry for them. Some object to my opinion, but I would not change mine. I don't have much money; I didn't receive much education, but human beings should not be estimated by their richness nor education. If I had had money and education, I could not have been saved by God. He gave me nine children and ten grandchildren. He showed me the place to work, and told me to work hard here until I go to the Kingdom of Heaven. It is His revelation to me. So I work as long as I live.



Yesterday I postponed the work and went to church, and I had a chance to meet you. God gave me this chance. If I had not attended the meeting, I would not have met you. I went to the church, met Rev. Morizawa who wanted to borrow some materials from me, gave him the materials and some published book of the Kenjin-Kai, and met you. In this way, God paid me many times for the work I had done for Him, even if I didn't expect the reward. So I was given a chance by Him to meet you, Rev. Morizawa, and some other fine people. When I go to Sacramento I can visit your church to say hello to you. This is wonderful. I have worked with my whole heart for the church, the Kenjin-Kai, and the Union. Although I didn't have much education, people elected me as an official since I worked hard sincerely.

I didn't want to be an elder in this church, but they chose me. I cannot stand at the pulpit to preside at worship services because I have done a lot of things and am afraid to stand before God. The people who can stand at the pulpit are those who have much nerve and are unbelieving. The people elected me as a candidate of elders soon after I began to believe in God, and I was elected as an elder. They say I was the only one that was elected an elder at one time. I didn't know anything about the church. What I had been doing was to do the offering and to take the children home.

I am attending every meeting and (prayer meeting) so that I can remember the names of the people. At the prayer meeting which I have attended for the first time, the story from the scripture was about the reformation of Paul the Apostle. He was threatening slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, and on the way to Damascus with letters of the high priest. Then he fell on the earth and heard a voice from Jesus, then he became blind. I like this part. To me, the revelation of God is grapes. That's all. All that I have to do from now on is to follow what He reveals to me. I pray every morning, even in



in the middle of the night. When I attended a welcome party for Rev. Honda, and I was the only person who attended from our church, Rev. Honda said to me, "In Japan Rev. Hattori got sick. Please pray for him, Rev. Ariga, and Rev. Murakami." And I pray for Rev. Honda, Rev. Hattori, Rev. Ariga, Rev. Murakami, Rev. Yamamoto, Rev. Nagasaki, Rev. Jiroh Nishimura, Rev. Takeo Igarashi and his brother. I pray for our church. I pray for my friends. I pray God to give me strength to lead my friends into belief by telling His words.

I do my best what I can do. So when I was asked to do this interview, I told him that I could tell about myself, but I couldn't tell about others. I was going to tell about myself in April, but since I was asked by you, I told my story without any lies. This is what the Lord wants me to do.

Q. I agree with you. Since you believe in God, you are able to see your life honestly. I don't think that ordinary people can do it. They can't tell about those sad stories you have experienced, and they will hide it. Because you are confident of yourself, you are able to tell all that you have experienced. And this confidence comes from your belief in God, the strength given by Him.

A. Before, these experiences were very hard for me. But once I began to believe in God, I found out that these hardships were for leading me into a religious life. The tragedy I have had turned into benefit. The words in the Bible came true. This is the way I feel about my experiences. I think the way of revelation from God differs from person to person, so does His blessing. It shouldn't be true if the Lord saves only great persons such as Paul. Insignificant men such as I should be saved, too, because these persons also



have small revelations, and there are quite a few of these people in the world. They should also be saved as well as the significant people. These great men can set a good example to others, but we the insignificant people who have already been saved by God should make efforts for them to be saved by God, too. Because even I, a trifle man, was saved. One of my friends always said to me, "You are now so afraid of your new wife that you can't even drink." So I said, "All right. It might be much better for you to drink and fight with your wife." Later he told me that he had stopped drinking since his birthday. I was going to give him a sake in memory of how he had stopped drinking, and I took note of it while I was working. Then I had lunch and went to see him. That was the day before Thanksgiving Day. He said to me, "Masao, happy Thanksgiving!" and gave me twenty dollars. Although I had been a gardener for 30 years or so, it was the first time I received 20 dollars as a Thanksgiving gift. I told this to my wife and she was surprised, too. So I got a twelve dollar sake and we signed our names on it. My wife also wrote a Japanese verse and gave it to him. I hear that the verse is still hanging on the wall of his house.

Another friend who came from the same Prefecture as mine liked to drink very much. He became lively when he was drinking. Since I stopped drinking earlier than he, I used to warn him that it was not good for his health to drink too much. Then he said, "Oh no! I would not stop drinking until I die." Can you guess what happened to him? One Sunday morning he got sick and around 2 o'clock he could hardly breathe. He asked to send for a doctor, and the doctor examined him and said to him, "Which do you want, your life, liquor,



or death?" Of course he answered that he wanted to live. Then the doctor told him to stop drinking, and he never drinks any more. Everyone can talk big when he is in good health, can't he.

Let me tell you another story. He was sent here from Peru during the war and married a lady I knew. He already had a wife in Japan, so he actually cohabited with the lady here. He worked hard and became a gardener. He came to me to ask to become a member of our gardeners' union. I said O.K. to him as I had known him. Since I was the president of the union in 1961, they admitted him immediately, saying that anyone I knew should have been a fine person. We organized the union about 20 years ago, and started to save money little by little every year by holding picnics and some other entertaining meetings. With that money we bought a hall for the union, but we needed a little more money for it. We asked the members to lend 100 dollars each with 4 percent interest per year. We bought the building at 50,000 dollars, borrowing about 20,000 dollars by the members. We have been paying the money back to the people every year chosen by a lottery with the money the union earned by holding picnics and conventions. At present there are still 20 people remaining to be paid back. Anyway, this man from Peru called me and said, "Mr. Hirata, you are an adviser of the union, aren't you?" I answered, "Yes," since it is a rule that those who are president and over 60 years old are to be an adviser. He said, "When are you going to return the money I lent for the building?" I explained the way we have been paying back the money. Then he said, "I'm too busy to attend the meetings." So I told him



in a calm voice that no one could withdraw the money from the savings of a bank unless he showed them a certificate of your savings, and that he had to show the certificate of winning the lottery to get the money back. Then he said, "I'm not interested in the money," in an angry voice. The next year he got sick and could not stop coughing. Although his wife worried about him, he neglected it, thinking that he had a cold. Then a doctor found out that he had lung cancer. I went to the hospital to visit him. Had he changed! The person who used to boast that he was all right even though he smoked three packages of cigarettes and drank a bottle of whiskey every day was now very weak and reduced to skin and bones. He made gestures that he would not drink or smoke any more. They can

They can boast about their richness and toughness against smoking and drinking only when they are healthy, but once they get sick, to whom can they beg for help? To no one, but God. If we only believe in God we don't have to worry about money or intelligence. To believe in God and to lead a religious life doesn't require money or education. All we need is our soul. In my opinion, they are not leading a real human life if they are still proud of their richness and education. There are quite a few of these people that I know.

Last year we had (key '73) and planned to distribute 100,000 of the Bible to the people. I distributed about 50 of them, and one day I took the Bible to a golf friend. He said to me, "I don't need the foolish book." I thought that he was just like I had been before I was saved by God. I would like as many of these people as



possible to hear my story of how I was saved, and I am going to give a speech on the 28th of April in a missionary meeting here. It is my duty given by the Lord, I think. I am thinking of visiting the people's houses one by one to talk with them about the Lord once or twice a week while I am still in good health.

Q. I think you have had some contact with the white people here.

What was your impression of them when you came to America?

A. They are very sociable outside; they never say improper things with the Japanese people. But they are very strong in mind.

Q. How strong?

A. They can say, "Yes" or "No" without hesitation. The Japanese people can't say "No" easily even though they don't like it. For example, a Japanese gardener cannot say "no" even though they don't pay him much and he thinks to himself, "That's all right. Since I have been working for them for a long time, I cannot tell them "no". On the other hand, a white gardener can say "no" if he doesn't like the work even if he has been working for them for more than ten years. The Japanese people are very warm-hearted and sentimental, while the white people are not. They are very cool.

Q. Which do you like better?

A. In business, the attitude of the white people is better. But as human beings, I like the attitude of the Japanese people. This attitude might come from Buddhism, but if the white people catch Christianity with the attitude that the Japanese people have, their Christianity should be much better. I have been reading a lot about Christianity such as the book by Rev. Ishikawa. The reason why it cannot spread easily in Japan is that Buddhism was already rooted



in people's mind long before Christianity was brought in about a 100 years ago via Europe and America. The history of Christianity in Japan is about 100 years old, while Buddhism has hundreds of years old history. If Christianity became a real thing in Japan, the country should be unspeakably better off. Recently Japan has been increasing its power economically. If they began to develop spiritually, they should be wonderful.

Q. Have you experienced persecution from the white people?

A. They sometimes said, "Jap, you go back to Japan. Go home." but I have never been persecuted physically. During World War I some German people burnt down the houses of the Japanese people. A Senator of the State of California named Hiram Johnson legislated various anti-Japanese laws, such as separating Japanese pupils from the white ones. They made a slogan which said, "Keep California white." We fought against this anti-Japanese movement very hard, saying "Keep California green." I'm sure that the Japanese people looked quite miserable to the white people. We didn't know English, but we had to work very hard to live, to support our family, and to bring up our children.

Q. Have you met some white people who were nice to you?

A. Yes. The people who owned vineyards and wanted us to work together, and the teachers of night classes who taught the immigrants who came to America at the age of 17 or 18, were very very kind to us. I still keep pictures of the. The name of the teacher was Miss Lippy and the name of the school was Lincoln School. She used to take us to a park or invite us to her house. She was really nice to us. There are two kinds of white people. One likes to criticize the



Japanese people politically, and the other likes us very much.

I went to night classes of a union high school, and I met a very kind teacher named Miss Grandemin. To me her kindness was not mere flattery, but from her heart. She used to tell us that she wanted to go to Hawaii. We asked why. She said, "Because it is warm there. It is very hard for me to go to school to teach early in the morning when it is cold."

Q. You have belonged to a lot of Japanese associations. Please tell me all of their names.

A. First, when I was in (Rezond,) I began to learn Kendoh at the (Torrence Rezond) gym. The teacher was Mr. Giziroh Takeno, and his wife was a younger sister of Rev. Yamagawa, and they were Christians. They had a school named Futaba School where Japanese language was taught to Japanese children. I sometimes took care of them and was invited to dinner. Sometimes I had a chance to hear his wife's prayer before the meal, but I don't remember what she prayed because I was not interested in it at that time.

Then we moved here after my eldest daughter was born, and I became a member of the Oasis Agricultural Association. This association also ran a school, so I worked as their accountant for seven years and was given a testimonial and a gift on a memorial day of the school. Then the association united with another association and changed its name to Heigen Industrial Association. Since I had worked for it for a long time, Mr. Sadaemon Kitagawa made me a vice president of the association. I didn't want to be it, but I couldn't refuse it as it was done by an election. Soon after that the war began. In the Riverside camp, I had a chance to see a



blacklist. The names of Mr. Sadaemon Kitagawa, Kikutaroh Asanoue, and some others were on it. Since Mr. Doibatake and Tsunode couldn't read English, I told them to bring it to me so that I could read it for them. I was curious about the reasons why they were arrested and saw the blacklist. On it, everything about us was checked up.

Q. When did you start playing golf?

A. When I was in the camp at Roseburg, we used to make baseball teams and play games. Then one guy living in the same shack said to me, "Mr. Hirata, are you interested in golf? It's a lot of fun. Won't you play with us?" But I was not interested in it at all. I thought it was not suitable for those who work on farms to play golf. I rather liked Kendoh. Anyway, I tried it, and found it very fun. Then a man named Nakamura from Seattle said to us, "If you play golf, you should know the rules. You would feel humiliated when you play with the white people." And we had a lecture on golf every night and six months later we played golf better than our teacher. Then I moved back to the camp at Poston. There, each camp had its own golf course, although it was sand. Since I liked it, I practiced it there, too. The young people were afraid of playing golf with the white people, but being aggressive, I finished 54 tournaments on Sunday, and left the camp for Denver. In Denver there were quite a few Japanese people and they had organized the Machara Golf Club and had been doing very well. I entered the club and played a lot of tournaments such as a 72-hole tournament, and won prizes. After I came back here from Denver, I continued playing golf. For me, to play golf was my only pleasure and I didn't do



anything but golf. Unfortunately, the place where we used to play golf was purchased by somebody to build houses, so we lost the place to play. We planned to become members of the Montebello Golf Course which the City of Montebello owned, and we moved this club through a recommendation of Mr. Jelly Bower whom we once learned golf. But the manager of the club was a very fastidious person. He said to us, "The white people don't like you Japanese people so much. Aren't you afraid of being killed by them?" So we said, "Don't you think we Japanese have the right to play golf anywhere we like," and we got the membership there. Then we organized our own golf club. When we were going to name the club, a lot of names were proposed to me, but I didn't like them all. And I, myself, named the club "Max Flight" since my name is Masao and the golf course was Montebello, they sounded similar in the first syllable. I had been the president of the Max Flight Golf Club for three years, then handed over the position to a nisei named Sigi Imamura. I don't like to stay in that status too long, and it is much better to hand over the position as soon as we get a new person to take over, and everything will go smoothly. Therefore, the club is now very popular, and Mr. Kei Nakagawa, the younger brother of Mr. Dave Nakagawa, is playing, too.

Q. Did you belong to a Japanese association?

A. No, I didn't. We had to organize a guild of gardeners to protect our work against some anti-Japanese legislation, and we organized it about 20 years ago. Being one of the members who started the guild, and being rather old, they insisted that I should be part of managing staff. I thought, "Oh, no! This is too much trouble if



they have meetings on Saturday nights because I get up at 4 o'clock on Sunday morning to play golf." Anyway, I accepted the work. The first president was Mr. Harada and he had been in that position for six months or so. Then Mr. Suzuki for three years until 1958, and Mr. Nakane next. When he was president, I went back to Japan in 1959. The next year the president was Mr. Tateoka and he said, "I would like to hand over this position to a nisei since it is already the age of nisei and my health is not so good anymore." At that time I was the second vice president, and the first vice president was a nisei named Frances Yanai. But no one wanted to be the president and one of the advisers of the guild recommended me as the president. So I said, "If nobody wants to do the work, I may be able to accept it." And I accepted it. Since I, the second vice president, became the president instead of the first one, they began to express their dissatisfaction.

Young people objected to having a picnic which used to be held every year. So I said to them, "Please listen to me. If this association won't hold picnic meetings or so, I am afraid it is going to be very difficult for the guild to develop. I'm sure it is not good for the future of the association. Please raise your hand if you agree to have a picnic this year. If the majority of you agree, I'll hold the picnic." Then everyone said to have the picnic and we held it. This happening is still on a record book of the guild and is sometimes mentioned by the people. And when I see some young people of the guild, I say to them, "You objected to the plan for the picnic at that time, didn't you. But we should do it when it is necessary." We are going to have the 20th anniversary



of the guild, but the way of thinking between the nisei and we the old differ. There are over 50 persons who have worked for the guild for more than 20 years, and we planned to give them a souvenir, but the majority of these people are still managing staff and they are the people who made this souvenir plan. I told them that it was not good for them to decide to give a present to themselves, but the young staff said, "Since we have been working hard for this guild for a long time, we can have 40 dollars worth of gift. We deserve it." In the managing staff meeting they voted for the plan but in a general meeting it was kicked back. They reduced the amount to 20 dollars for each person and it was passed. I said to the president, "Mr. Hirano, the result was your victory for the plan, but you have to realize that there were eleven objections. This is a good sign. If everyone voted for the plan, it would be a big problem."

I like to listen to a story of Mitsuhide Akechi accompanied by a lute, and I really think that it tells the real truth. It says:

Prosperity of man may win Heaven,  
but Justice of Heaven be always on man.

The last notes by him when he fell down from his horse are also very meaningful:

My treason I regret  
Justice of God I knew now  
Vain is my dream of life

He rebelled against his master Nabunaga Oda and killed him, but he had to be killed by Hideyoshi Toyotomi, a man of Oda. He realized when he was dying that his death was a providential justice. His daughter Tamako Garashia Hosokawa was a Christian, and she died in her husband's castle which was set on fire. His father, Akechi,



sent her his men to rescue her, but she wouldn't move out of the castle because she knew well that this was the justice of the Lord. We cannot do anything at all to God's will but obey. It is absolute. If we work for Him, He returns something to us for our deed.

Q. Do you have anything else to say about your children?

A. I felt so lonely when my two sons left for Europe as soldiers of the air force that I made Japanese verses:

Sons, my treasure, up I brought,  
Bravely left for defense national.

Morning and evening,  
Wondering am I  
How my sons' duty going.

I wanted to express my love for my children and my feeling in these poems. The feeling of writers should come out through the poems if they earnestly feel. For example, the poem named "Kinshu Castle" by General Nogi when he was fighting near the castle in Manchuria and received news of his eldest son's death in battle. Through his poem I can clearly see his feeling and I am always moved by the poem when I read it. We should sing these poems with the same feeling as the writers. In my opinion, a poem should be estimated not by its content but by the feeling that comes out of the poem. I am to give a confession of my life in public, but I think that the only thing I have to do is to tell the truth. I don't care how they would estimate my speech. When I have to read the Bible at (a toast ceremony) I practice to read the paragraph for a few days, for I think I have to read without any mistakes because they are the words of God.

Q. The sansei and yonsei don't know the issei. What would you like to tell them about the life?



A. We Japanese people here are also citizens in this country and have the same rights as the others. But the color of our face and of our hair will not change even after 100 years although the physique would become bigger. As long as we have the blood of the Japanese, we have to inherit the good merits that we Japanese possess, such as the values of caring for one another. That's the only way we can be better in this American society. We shouldn't be completely Americanized. So every Sunday I take my children with me to play golf together. That is very good for them, and I do my best for them. Parents have to lead their children in a good direction. My sons are also bringing up their children to be fine persons. As a matter of fact the son of my second son is receiving a scholarship to become a doctor.

Q. Faith is very important to our life. What do you think the most important thing to our life is?

A. We should lead our children to a belief in God while they are still young, and we should let them realize His will definitely. That's the most important thing for human beings, and there would be no mistake if we follow His will. I really want to stress the importance of the religious education.

Q. What do you think is lacking in the sansei?

A. They don't take good care of things so much because there are more than enough things around them. Another thing that I would like to advise them is not to forget courtesy. If they do something without courtesy, they become unable to distinguish between being formal and being casual. Like yesterday, if a minister didn't stand at the pulpit without formality, it means that he set a bad



example to the people and that is not good at all. We should wear a necktie at a party if everyone wears it. It would look unsuitable for the people if a minister attends the president's inaugural ceremony in casual clothes without a tie. At least he should express his pious feeling to God. People say that the clothes don't have anything to do with their feeling or attitude, but in my opinion, they should wear proper clothes on certain occasions if they have one. I think that it is necessary for us to devote ourselves both physically and spiritually to what we do. So when I work I work in an old pants and shoes, and when I go somewhere formal, I will wear the clothes which are clean so that I won't give a bad impression to the people I will meet.